

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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INFO AMCONGEN HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 22670

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, LA, TH

SUBJ: THAI CABINET AGREES TO REOPEN SOME POINTS ON BORDER WITH LAOS

REF: A) VIENTIANE 1870 B) VIENTIANE 1885

SUMMARY: CABINET AGREED TO REOPENING OF ADDITIONAL BORDER POINTS, RESPONDING REPORTEDLY TO ARGUMENT THAT ACTION WOULD HELP LAOS MAINTAIN ITS INDEPENDENCE. END SUMMARY.

1. CABINET AGREED IN PRINCIPLE AUGUST 10 TO REOPEN OTHER POINTS ON LAO-THAI BORDER. ACTION FOLLOWED PRIME MINISTER SENI PRAMOT'S VISIT TO UDORN AND NONG KHAI AUGUST 7, DURING WHICH HE INVESTIGATED CORRUPTION CHARGES AGAINST LOCAL AUTHORITIES INVOLVED IN REFUGEE AFFAIRS AS WELL AS REVIEWED BORDER SITUATION, ACCORDING TO CONSULATE UDORN. SENI COMMENTED DURING VISIT THAT RT G WILL NOT PUSH LAO REFUGEES BACK TO HOMELAND AGAINST THEIR WISHES. CABINET DECISION MADE ALSO AFTER HEARING FOREIGN MINISTER PHICHAI RATTAKUN'S REPORT ON HIS RECENT VISITS TO LAOS AND VIET-
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NAM. MINISTRIES OF DEFENSE, INTERIOR, AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS,

AND NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL ARE TO DETERMINE WHICH BORDER POINTS SHOULD BE REOPENED.

2. CHAMRAT CHOMPHUPHONG, MFA SOUTHEAST ASIA DIVISION CHIEF, TOLD EMBOFF HIS MINISTRY WAS VERY SATISFIED WITH THE TRIPS TO VIENTIANE AND HANOI. OUTCOME OF BOTH PARTICULARLY PLEASING IN VIEW OF FACT THAI WENT EMPTY-HANDED (I.E., HAVING NOTHING UP SLEEVES TO OFFER IN RETURN FOR ANY GESTURES OF HOST COUNTRIES). DELEGATION CONSIDERED THAT IT WAS WELL RECEIVED BY AUTHORITIES IN VIENTIANE, EVEN IF THE GOVERNMENT GUEST HOUSE IS NOT THE WORLD'S MOST COMFORTABLE PLACE TO SLEEP. (EMBASSY REPORTING ON VISIT TO HANOI IN SEPTTEL).

3. ON QUESTION OF BORDER REOPENING, CHAMRAT CONFIRMED THAT THE PDRL REQUESTED THAT THIS BE DONE AT FIVE POINTS. THAI REPLIED THAT THIS WAS ASKING TOO MUCH OF THAILAND AT ONE TIME; ALTHOUGH THEY SAID THEY COULD MAKE NO PROMISES, THEY DID AGREE TO TRY FOR TWO OR THREE POINTS, TO WHICH RTG CONCURRED IN AUGUST 10 ACTION. CHAMRAT SAID WE SHOULD SEE POINTS REOPENED WITHIN NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS; RTG PLANS TO MOVE QUICKLY ON THIS ONE. ALTHOUGH THE TWO SIDES AGREED IN PRICIPLE ON SOME ACTIONS TO TAKE IN THE EVENTUALITY THAT ADDITIONAL POINTS WOULD BE OPENED, HE SAID THERE ARE STILL A NUMBER OF DETAILS TO BE WORKED OUT, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE THAI SIDE.

4. SAME SOURCE INDICATED THAI WERE GENUINELY IMPRESSED BY POINTED WAY IN WHICH LAO OFFICIALS MADE CLEAR TO THEM THEIR INTENTION TO KEEP THEIR COUNTRY INDEPENDENT, THERE BEING THE STRONG IMPLICATION THE LAO HAD THE VIETNAMESE IN MIND. HE SAID PHICHAU USED THIS AS HIS MAIN ARGUMENT IN YESTERDAY'S CABINET MEETING TO CONVINCE HIS COLLEAGUES TO REOPEN BORDER POINTS.

5. CHAMRAT GAVE IMPRESSION THAT THE THAI DID NOT PRESS HARD ON THE QUESTION OF LAO SUPPORT TO THE INSURGENCY, AND THE LAO ACTED IN THE SAME MANNER WITH RESPECT TO THAI AID
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TO THE RESISTANCE. THEY INTENDED THEIR STATEMENT IN COMMUNIQUE THAT NEITHER SIDE WOULD ALLOW ITS TERRITORY TO BE USED AS A BASE TO INTERVENE IN ANOTHER COUNTRY TO COVER BOTH OF THEIR CONCERNS.

6. ON THE MEKONG, POSSIBILITY OF REDEMARCATING THAT PORTION OF THE BOUNDARY WHICH RUNS THROUGH IT APPEARS TO

REMAIN QUITE VAGUE, THERE BEING ONLY AGREEMENT TO STUDY THE QUESTION SOMETIME IN THE FUTURE. HOWEVER, THERE WAS BROAD ACCORD ON ALLOWING UNIMPEDED FISHING AND PATROLLING ON THE RIVER. CHAMRAT SAID LAT SIDE OFFERED NO OBJECTION TO THE LATTER ACTIVITY.

7. OVERFLIGHT RIGHTS. SOURCE CONFIRMED THAT THE PRINCIPLE OF OVERFLIGHT OF BOTH LAOS AND VIET-NAM IS NOW ACCEPTED. NEXT STEP IS HOLDING OF TECHNICAL DISCUSSIONS.

8. CHAMRAT EMPHASIZED THAT MUCH REMAINS UNRESOLVED BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES (E.G., TRANSIT RIGHTS), REQUIRING A NUMBER OF CONTACTS IN THE FUTURE. HE EXPECTS PDRL TO DISPATCH NEW AMBASSADOR HERE VERY SOON TO HELP IN THIS PROCESS. ALTHOUGH THE LAO DID NOT COME RIGHT OUT AND ASK FOR AID, THEY DID NOTE THEIR NEEDS FOR ASSISTANCE, AND WE CAN PROBABLY EXPECT TO SEE THE THAI RESPOND TO EXTENT SIMILAR TO THAT IN THE PAST.

9. THAI OFFICIAL'S STATEMENT QUOTED IN REF B THAT "THAI PEOPLE, NOT MILITARY, OPPOSED BORDER REOPENING" WAS WELL TAKEN IN OUR OPINION. PHICHAI PLANS TO GO ON TELEVISION WITHIN NEXT DAY OR TWO TO REPORT ON HIS TRIP. SPEECH WILL BE DESIGNED PARTICULARLY TO EDUCATE PEOPLE ON REASONS FOR REOPENING POINTS ON THE BORDER, CHAMRAT ADVISED. WHITEHOUSE

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